

7 Public Involvement

7.1 Public Input to Watershed Management Plans

Public input is an important component in the effective management of MDC/DWM properties. As managers of public land, MDC/DWM staff has a responsibility to solicit public input in order to address concerns, explain existing management practices, and integrate new ideas when practical in order to provide the best possible protection for the water supply. The goals of the Division's public input process for land management on all watersheds are to:

- ◆ Understand the broad range of public issues and concerns regarding forest and wildlife management at the Division's watersheds so that the Division can better integrate the concerns of the public into protection strategies for maintaining watershed integrity.
- ◆ Improve the understanding of the technical aspects of forest and wildlife management on the Division's watersheds and to generate creative program ideas.
- ◆ Educate the public regarding the purposes and goals of the Division with regard to its watershed management program.
- ◆ Work to educate the public regarding strategies for the implementation of the land management program, in order to address concerns and retain public confidence in these strategies.

7.2 Regular Revisions to the Wachusett Land Management Plan

Progress on implementation of the Wachusett Land Management Plan will be presented as a component of an annual Wachusett public meeting. As a component of this meeting, Forestry and Natural Resources staff will review forest and wildlife management activities, land acquisition progress, and a variety of related research or policy developments. It is the intention of the agency that land management on MDC watershed properties will be an adaptive management activity. Adaptive management is an effort to account for the rapid developments in the science of land management by making appropriate operational changes within a time frame that is shorter than the ten-year perspective of the land management plans.

7.3 Scientific and Technical Review

Shortly following the writing of the most recent land management plan for MDC properties on the Quabbin watershed, the DWM organized the first meeting of the Science and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). This committee was assembled in an effort to bring managers together with scientists to provide review and advice on the technical (as opposed to the political) aspects of management. The STAC is co-chaired by a scientist and an MDC staff member, and the group is indemnified in their role as outside advisors. The STAC, which includes approximately 30 scientists from colleges and organizations throughout the northeast, has met with MDC resource managers once a year since 1996, generally with a principal topic of focus. Topics have included optimizing opening sizes for forest regeneration and water protection; management recommendations for areas with special management restrictions (islands, wetlands, steep slopes, designated natural areas); strategies to respond

to the effects of the hemlock woolly adelgid; protocol for the release of biocontrol agents (e.g., an imported beetle proposed for release to control the hemlock woolly adelgid); and recommendations for the management of “historic woodlots” (areas on the watersheds that have been managed, but have always been forested).

The Science and Technical Advisory Committee, although assembled to address issues arising from management at Quabbin, has always dealt with issues of broad importance across all Division properties. The writing of this Wachusett Watershed Land Management Plan has benefited from past STAC discussions, and has expanded on concepts developed during STAC meetings. It is the Division’s intention to continue to use this advisory group to address the scientific and technical issues of management that arise in the implementation of this and other land management plans.